

# Jarai language

The **Jarai language** (in Vietnamese Cho-Rai, Chor, Chrai, Djarai, Gia-Rai, Gio-Rai, Jorai or Mthur; in Khmer ភាសាចារ៉ាយ - Pheasaea Chrai) is a Malayo-Polynesian language spoken by the Jarai people of Vietnam and Cambodia. The speakers of Jarai number approximately 262,800,<sup>[3]</sup> not including other possible Jarai communities in countries other than Vietnam and Cambodia such as United States of America. They are the largest of the upland ethnic groups of Vietnam's Central Highlands known as Degar or Montagnards, and 25 per cent of the population in the Cambodian province of Ratanakiri.

The language is in the Chamic subgroup of the Malayo-Polynesian languages, and is thus related to the Cham language of central Vietnam.

A number of Jarai also live in the United States, having resettled there following the Vietnam War.

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## Classification

The Jarai language has been classified since 1864 as a Western Malayo-Polynesian Malayic, Achinese-Chamic, Chamic, South, Plateau identified by M. Fontaine as related to the languages of the Thiames (Chams) and Rade of the ancient kingdom of Champa, today the province of Annam.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Geographic distribution and dialects

Jarai	
<b>Native to</b>	Vietnam, Cambodia
<b>Region</b>	Vietnam Central Highlands & Ratanakiri, Cambodia
<b>Native speakers</b>	260,000 (2007–2008) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Language family</b>	Austronesian <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Malayo-Polynesian<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Malayo-Sumbawan(?)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Chamic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Highlands<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Jarai</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Writing system</b>	Vietnam: modified Vietnamese alphabet; Cambodia: modified Khmer alphabet
Official status	
<b>Recognised minority language in</b>	Vietnam, Cambodia
Language codes	
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	jra
<b>Glottolog</b>	jara1266 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/1anguoid/id/jara1266">http://glottolog.org/resource/1anguoid/id/jara1266</a> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

Jarai is spoken by some 262,800 people in Cambodia and Vietnam (Simons, 2017) where it is recognized as an official minority language, although in Cambodia it has not its own writing in the Khmer scripts. Additionally there are some hundreds of Jarai speakers in United States from the Jarai refugees settled in that country after the Vietnamese War. Jarai dialects can be mutually unintelligible. Đào Huy Quyền (1998)<sup>[5]</sup> lists the following subgroups of Jarai dialects and their respective locations.

- **Jarai Pleiku**: in the Pleiku area.
- **Jarai Cheoreo**: in AJunPa (Phú Bồn).
- **Jarai ARáp**: in northwestern Pleiku, southwestern Kon Tum.
- **Jarai H'dRung**: in northeastern Pleiku, southeastern Kon Tum.
- **Jarai Tbulan**: western Pleiku.

Other related groups include:

- **HRoi**: in western Phú Yên, southern Bình Định. Mixed Ede and Jarai people.
- **M'dhur**: in southern Phú Yên. Mixed Ede and Jarai people.
- **Hàlang**: in southwestern Kon Tum, and some in Laos and Cambodia. Mixed Sedang and Jarai people.

## Phonology

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Influenced by the surrounding Mon–Khmer languages, words of the various Chamic languages of Southeast Asia, including Jarai, have become disyllabic with the stress on the second syllable. Additionally, Jarai has further evolved in the pattern of Mon–Khmer, losing almost all vowel distinction in the initial minor syllable. While trisyllabic words do exist, they are all loanwords. The typical Jarai word may be represented:

(C)(V)-C(C)V(V)(C)

where the values in parentheses are optional and "(C)" in the cluster "C(C)" represents a liquid consonant /l/, /r/ or a semivowel /w/, /j/. In Jarai dialects spoken in Cambodia, the "(C)" in the cluster "C(C)" can also be the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/, a phoneme used by the Jarai in Cambodia, but not attested in Vietnam. The vowel of the first syllable in disyllabic words is most often the mid-central unrounded vowel, /ə/, unless the initial consonant is the glottal stop /ʔ/. The second vowel of the stressed syllable produces a diphthong.

## Alphabet

During the French Indochina, they introduced a Jarai alphabet using the Vietnamese alphabet at the beginning of the 20th century. With the introduction of the Bible in Jarai language, using that alphabet by Christian missionaries in Vietnam after the Vietnamese War, the Jarai increased their literacy and there are today many publications for the Vietnamese Jarai. There are 40 letters - 21 consonants + 19 vowels / 34 phonemes - 9 vowel phonemes + 25 consonant phonemes.

1)	Aa	Ăă	Ââ	Bb	Ḃḃ	Čč/Ĉĉ	Dd	Ḑḑ	Ee
IPA	a:	a	â	b	ʔb	tʃ	d	ʔd	ɛ:
Km <sup>[6]</sup>	អៈ	អា	អិ	ប	អប	ឆ	ដ	ឆដ	អេ
2)	Ěě	Êê	Ěě/Ěē	Gg	Hh	li	Ĵĵ	Jj	DJ dj
IPA	ɛ	e:	e	ɡ	h	i:	i	dʒ	ʔdʒ
Km	អេ	អៈ	អេ	ក	ហ	អ៊ៈ	អ៊ី	ឌឃ	អេឌឃ
3)	Kk	Ll	Mm	Nn	Ññ	NG ng	Oo	Ŏŏ	Ôô
IPA	k	l	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	ɔ:	ɔ	o:
Km	កា	ល	ម	ន	ញ	ង	អុៈ	អុ	អ
4)	Ŏŏ/Ŏō	Ơơ	Ỡỡ/Ỡở	Pp	Rr	Ss	Tt	Uu	Ůů
IPA	o	ə:	ə	p	r	s	t	u:	u
Km	អូ	អ៊ៈ	អ៊ី	ផ	រ	ស	ត	អ៊ៈ	អូ
5)	Ưư	Ỡỡ/Ỡở	Ww	Yy					
IPA	ɯ:	ɯ	w	j					
Km	អ៊ី	អូ	វ	យ					

Vowels

There are 9 vowels<sup>[7]</sup>:

	Front	Central	Back	
Close	i ɨ		ɯ	u
Mid	e	ə	o	
Open mid	ɛ		ɔ	
Open		a ă		

Consonants

There are 24 consonants<sup>[7]</sup>:

		Labial	Dental/ Alveolar	Post- alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	voiceless	p	t			k	ʔ
	aspirated	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>			k <sup>h</sup>	
	voiced	b	d			g	
	implosive	ɓ	ɗ		f		
Affricate	voiceless			tʃ			
	voiced			dʒ			
Fricative			s				h
Nasal	voiced	m	n		ɲ	ŋ	
	preglottalized	ʔm					
Tap			r				
Lateral			l				
Approximant		w			j		

The implosives have also been described as preglottalized stops, but Jensen (2013) describes that the closure of glottis and oral cavity occur simultaneously.<sup>[7]</sup>

## References

1. Jarai (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/jrai/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Jarai" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/jara1266>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Simons, Gary F. and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2017. Jarai. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Twentieth edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Link retrieved on 05.06.17 from <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/jrai>
4. David Thomas (1989). A 19th century perception of Chamic relationships. Mahidol University and Summer Institute of Linguistics. Link retrieved on 05.01.2017 from <http://sealang.net/archives/mks/pdf/16-17:181-182.pdf>
5. Đào Huy Quyền (1998). *Nhạc khí dân tộc Jrai và Bahnar [Musical instruments of the Jrai and Bahnar]*. Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản trẻ.
6. Correlation with Khmer Alphabet using IPA
7. Jensen (2013)

## Further reading

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- Lafont, Pierre-Bernard & Nguyễn Văn Trọng (1968). *Lexique jarai, français, vietnamien, parler de la province de Plei Ku*. Publications de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, v 63. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient.
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## External links

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- [A Preliminary Jarai - English Online Dictionary \(http://dictionaryq.com/jarai/\)](http://dictionaryq.com/jarai/)
  - [Preliminary research on Jarai phonology in Cambodia \(https://web.archive.org/web/20120518022857/jarai-in-cambodia.org\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20120518022857/jarai-in-cambodia.org)
  - [Fairly comprehensive bibliography of Jarai language research \(http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Jarai\\_language/Bibliography\)](http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Jarai_language/Bibliography)
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